

Moorestown vet is cleared in death of racehorse

By CAROL COMEGNO
Courier-Post Staff

PHILADELPHIA — A federal judge on Wednesday dismissed all charges against a Moorestown veterinarian convicted in 1997 of killing a racehorse for the insurance money.

U.S. District Court Judge Clarence Turner made that decision after barring the government's main witness from testifying at a second trial that was

pending for Dr. Leonard Patrick, 48, of Moorestown.

"After what I have been through, I am overwhelmed with joy and relief and thankful for the support of my wife, children, relatives and friends throughout this ordeal," the doctor said after the ruling Wednesday.

Turner dismissed the charge against the doctor after the government said it could not prosecute the case without the testimony of Robert P. Deo, a

Bucks County horse owner and trainer.

Patrick's lawyer, Glenn Zeitz of Cherry Hill and Philadelphia, had challenged a government request that Deo be allowed to testify only about this matter but could invoke the Fifth Amendment about his present and past criminal problems.

The judge originally ordered a new trial after finding the government withheld from the defense key documents that showed

prejudice by Deo in the first trial. In granting the dismissal, Turner agreed with Zeitz's contention that the defense would be unable to administer a complete cross-examination on credibility if Deo was able to selectively invoke his right against self-incrimination.

"He was able to blame me to escape his own problems. I am glad there finally is justice," Patrick said.

Deo had claimed that Patrick had orchestrated a plan to give a

lethal injection to the horse Oblige to cause a quick and painless death after another vet had given the horse a therapeutic injection. The horse died of a massive infection after receiving an injection in a knee joint at Philadelphia Park Race Track on June 14, 1994.

Deo had bought the horse for \$10,000 but had it insured for \$75,000, according to testimony at the first trial.